

Combating Illiteracy for ...

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5-year plan for its literacy and post literacy programs. The Department of Adult and Media Education has so far followed the traditional approach to the problem of eradicating the illiteracy and implementing the Adult Education. But, of late, it has been adapting a two pronged approach. One is to follow the conventional means of education through the Adult Learning Centers with the involvement of rural Communities and the stakeholders. It is a chalk and board method. It also produced some Primers and evolved a pattern of education that would make the adult learners equivalents to the grade 5 of the present elementary school education. Compared to the adhoc and impromptu methods of Adult Education Programs followed during the pre-independence period, the present Government is implementing more scientifically planned methods which required a lot of manpower and capacity building. The present resource personnel organizing the Adult education programs are not trained in the modern methods and there is a long way to go for organizing this sector on a better rationale than in the past.

The second one is the modern media method. The Department runs its own Radio through a 10kW MW transmitter. Through its own radio, it is presently offering nearly 21 hours program a week in Two languages, Tigrigna and Tigre on Health, Agriculture, Environment, Civics, ECD (Early Childhood Development) and HAMSET (HIV, AIDS, Malaria, STD and TB). The programs are transmitted both in the morning and in the evening every day. There are a variety of formats such as music, folk songs, drama, dialogue and

narration—among these programs. Due to the extreme topographical variations, the 10kW MW transmitter could not access itself all the remote and interior areas of Eritrea. As such many areas may not have received the benefit of these programs. Thus most of the programs, launched by the Department as of now, are in their infancy for the obvious reasons. Yet many moves are afoot to intensify and expand the ongoing programs.

Achieving Education for All and Millenium Development Goals

The most important aim or objective behind many of its programs in the offing now is to

ensure hundred percent equity and access, quality and relevance in order for achieving the universalisation of elementary education and millenium development goals to catch up with the Fast Track Initiative. As part of these efforts, the Government has decided to go in for a 10kWSW Transmitter, which would soon be commissioned with the World Bank aid to broadcast the educational programs for the Formal and Non-formal Sectors. The aim of launching this Transmitter is to achieve twin objectives (Japanese NHK and the BBC Model). One is to supplement the class room education in the formal sector and the second is to act as the source of enriching the teachers. With regard to non-formal sector, all efforts are underway to enrich the present modules of transmission for Adults by way of including curricular components and expanding the present scope of Adult and Life long Continuing Education.

This is a major step forward in achieving the Universalization of Elementary Education and Education for All. Launching of an Educational



Television Channel sooner or later, as it is under the consideration of the Government, would be a turning point in the history of Eritrean Education in that the Adult Education programs through such a channel would help transform the rural illiterate societies into knowledge societies very rapidly (both the Chinese and Indian Models which themselves are modeled on the British National Open University). They would help promote the vocational training relevant to the local areas too. Motivation levels raise and they supplement the present on going adult education programs to greater extent.

Further it would enable the cost reduction on the present infrastructure and capacity building. In addition to it would play a complementary role to

what already Radio would assume to accomplish the Dakar Framework of Action. In addition to, the Distance Education Programs both for Teachers (as part of Teacher Development and Training) and for the Dropouts at various levels would become quite handy and give immense hope for those who could not avail or pursue the conventional education for their personal, mostly economical and traditional, reasons. This would ensure achieving quickly the Gender Parity and Gender Equality of Millenium Development Goals better than the conventional mode as the women or girls in traditional Eritrean societies hesitate a lot to go to schools and colleges which are located very far and do not have any safe boarding facilities and would fit very well with ideas and objectives of UNESCO and ADEA.

In keeping with the above requirements the Department of Adult and Media Education has entrusted the author of this article with the task of preparing a comprehensive paper on the role of Media Education in Eritrean Education with a clear objective to give a broad and holistic treatment to the subject including investigating the low cost technologies both networking and localized, and academic and administrative, appropriate to the Eritrean Context. The paper has thus gone into both technological and academic facets of the subject in depth by not only surveying the world literature on this subject but also by drawing comparisons from different experiences of the Third world countries. The paper has further essayed how far is Eritrea in reaching the UNESCO's minimum, while relating many other countries' experiences in this regard to Eritrea including —how the Russia's definition— mental work linked to physical work—is very close to the present education model of Eritrea. Further it dwelt upon the accuracy of the definition of Life long and Continuing education, as made out by the Russians, contrasted with the other definitions prevalent in Europe and Asia.

The Chinese definition of illiterate and its parameters of imparting Adult education, using its vast bulk electronic resources such as Radio and Television Universities, the Japanese Model of

Formal Education through Radio and TV, the Indonesian way of organizing the Adult Education programs and Indian models of Adult education came very close to the geographical and Socio-economic conditions of Eritrea. Especially India's economy linked Adult Education Programs that led to rural cooperatives and rural prosperity through white revolution and green revolution are found to be of crucial value to Eritrea's economy linked Adult Education programs. Further the development of education linked cooperatives such as Self-help groups for women in certain Provinces of India have immense promise for a very successful promotion of the Adult Education campaign for women in Eritrea.

Thus the Government of Eritrea since the last war with its neighbor has spared no stone unturned in meeting the national objectives of Education, of which the universalization of elementary education and millenium development goals are the most important ones. For a Government, which did miracles in educating the masses during the pre-independence time, to achieve hundred per cent literacy is not an insuperable task. It may take some more time for obvious reasons such as required scientific planning and funding, but soon it would be a reality undoubtedly.

Today's Eritrea is the outcome of the sacrifice of thousands of war fighters who fought for a separate identity for their nation at international level both intellectually and economically. These two are interlinked and would be come reality when the nation moves forward on the lines of the se avowed objectives. As an Indian I am glad to be associated with these war heroes and fighters both in my department and in the Ministry of Education. Eritrean youth pick up the threads, where their earlier heroes left it, and move ahead in realization of these noble objectives. None other than this—is the fitting tribute to the glorious sacrifice of those heroes who are not amidst us now but continue to look at anxiously for their nation's prosperity. Awet N' Hafash.

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A singer who lifts...

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lover. Sometimes, he composes lyrics about things that happen to him. He has a song about one woman who really drove him crazy a decade ago. He loved her while she was his schoolmate. He tried everything to persuade her to be his lover, but no matter what he did she declined. Finally, she went out of the country. A year ago, she came back for vocation. They met at one occasion, where he performed. She approached him and asked him if he knew her, which somehow puzzled him because he never forgot her. He simply told her that he would answer her question later. After that, he took out a piece of paper and wrote, "Do you know me?" The question she asked him was a launching pad for a song. He added some verses and it was a complete lyric. The first few lines of the lyric follow:

I know you, know you
Don't make me sick?
I know you for sure
I still remember
When you were my heart's choice

At another occasion, when the woman came for yet another entertainment, he sang the song. He says that there are events that happen to you and are directly

the basis for a song.

He has an unreserved respect for his father, who was one of the leading senior musicians. In fact, the roots for Wedi Tekabo's musical instincts seem to be his father. At first, however, his father Tekabo did not accept him with open arms when he started singing. His father wanted him to be interested in his education because singing could divert him from a lot of things. After all, his father has first-hand experience about the world of music. There were times when Tekabo broke the 'kirar' of the ambitious would-be singer. His father's views took a U-turn when he watched on TV his son's performance in Sawa. Tekabo soon wrote him a letter, saying, "I never thought you would turn up to be like this. Try to work hard. Try to be the best." After that, his father gives him constant encouragement and guidance. Tekabo even tries to improve some of Wedi Tekabo's lyrics.

Although he has not submitted a song for a competition, he won a reward of 5,000 nakfa for good performance. One of his acclaimed song is "Ab mntayu haylu," which was extremely praised two-three years ago. During the Eritrea Festival 2003 music competition for the Top Ten, the particular song was not

enlisted for competition because it was not recorded in studio. Any way, for the shrewness of the song, he received the reward. Wedi Tekabo sings not only in Tigrinya but also in English. He thinks that by singing in English, he would try to extend Eritrean songs to the outside world.

Wedi Tekabo has a lot of fans that talk to him on wide variety of issues. While some push him to sing more and to release an album, others give him brotherly advices. He notes that the fact that fans have so much faith in him makes him to bear more responsibility, and every time they remind him of releasing an album, he becomes thoughtful of releasing a quality one.

Other singers repeat many of his songs in various occasions, especially at wedding feasts where bands are paid for performing. He says that such repetitions make him upset sometimes because the songs, which were born out of much toil, are released to the public informally.

Like his much acclaimed song "Ab mntayu haylu" [where does his power lie], Wedi Tekabo's powers seem to lie in creating marvelous songs that have acceptance from the public. But the public won't stop waiting patiently for his upcoming albums.